Learning difficulty is common in early adolescence. It favors grade repetition, persistent low school performance, and school dropout ideation at 16 years without qualification. It is not a random event but can be due to enduring individual difficulties which can alter physical, mental and cognitive capabilities. Individual difficulties include family and socioeconomic difficulties and also a wide range of health-related problems and violence sustained by adolescents. These issues are well known to be common in early adolescence and can be aggravated in early adolescence and adulthood.

This study in early adolescence assessed the relationships of learning difficulty with socioeconomic factors (gender, age, nationality, family structure, father’s occupation, and family income), alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and hard drug use, health status, back pain, allergy, depressive symptoms, sustained physical/verbal violence, sexual abuse, and poor social support.

Boys represented 49.9% of subjects. Mean age was 13.5 (SD 1.3). European and non-European immigrants represented respectively 3.5% and 3.5% of subjects. One quarter of adolescents lived with divorced/separated parents or in reconstructed families, 11.9% with single parents or other non-intact families. Half of subjects had low parents’ education, 32.5% low father’s social status (manual workers 25.0% and non-working 7.5%), and 17.7% insufficient family income.

Alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and hard drug use affected respectively 35.2%, 11.2%, 5.6%, and 2.8% of subjects. Overweight affected 25.5% of subjects, obesity 10.6%, depressive symptoms 13.3%, poor health status 25.8%, back pain 50.6%, allergy 36.6%, sustained physical/verbal violence 16.2%, sexual abuse 3.7%, and poor social support 53.8%.

Learning difficulty affected 29.5% of subjects (14.4%, 7.4%, 4.0% and 3.7% had score 1, 2, 3 and 4, respectively). School repetition, low school performance, and school dropout ideation were also common: 14.7%, 8.2% and 3.8%, respectively.

The learning difficulty score was strongly related to school repetition (gender-age-adjusted odds ratio 1.56, 95% CI 1.38-1.76), low school performance (2.39, 2.08-2.75) and school dropout ideation (1.79, 1.50-2.13) (Fig. 1).

**DISCUSSION**

Learning difficulty was common and often resulted in grade repetition, low school performance, and school dropout ideation in early adolescence. Individual differences in learning difficulty were due to licit and illicit drug use, overweight, obesity, poor health status, back pain, allergy, depressive symptoms, poor social support and maltreatments. This was expected because most of these issues affect physical, mental and cognitive capabilities as well as working performance and child development.

The associations between learning difficulty with health-related difficulties, unhealthy behaviors, sustained violence, sexual abuse, and poor social support were highly explained by family and socioeconomic difficulties. Among the last decades, families are greatly changing leading to more children have fewer siblings and live with cohabiting, divorced/separated or single parents [8]. A parents’ separation/divorce often results in poorer living conditions (residence/deficiency environment), lower socioeconomic resources, and lower social support. Poverty in households with children is raising in nearly all OECD countries (12.7%).